APHIS Site Visit Report – Czech Republic
Evaluation for CSF and SVD

Introduction

APHIS conducted a site visit from June 13-17, 2005, to complement and verify information previously provided by the Czech Republic in support of a request to be considered free from classical swine fever (CSF) and swine vesicular disease (SVD). The site visit team met with Czech veterinary officials at the State Veterinary Administration (SVA), then visited a slaughterhouse approved by FSIS to export to the United States, regional veterinary offices, district veterinary offices, a swine assembly center, large and small swine producers, and a veterinary inspection point for hunted wild boar. The team did not visit the diagnostic laboratories; these will be evaluated at a later date.

The composition of the team was as follows:

Kelly Rhodes	Veterinary Medical Officer Regionalization Evaluation Services, APHIS
Tom Kasari	Veterinary Medical Officer/Senior Analyst Risk Analysis Team, CEAH, VS, APHIS
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Per the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), the Czech Republic has no definitive plans at present moment to export live swine, pork, or pork products to the United States – the volume and type of commodities for export would depend on commercial interests once the market opened.

Visits to official veterinary services offices

State Veterinary Administration (SVA) headquarters

The site visit team met with representatives of the central and regional SVA offices at the SVA headquarters in Prague, including the CVO and the Deputy Head of the Department of Animal Health and Welfare. Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Animal Identification were also present. Presentations were given on the structure of the SVA and the animal identification and holding registration systems. The headquarters office building was quite run-down, with exposed wiring in the hallways – officials indicated that the central SVA offices had only recently been moved out of the Ministry of Agriculture building several kilometers away.

1. Organization of the veterinary services

The SVA is the central competent authority for the Czech Republic, with 115 employees at the headquarters offices. The SVA has approximately 1700 employees total, of which 770 are veterinarians, 93 are veterinary assistants (level of training between veterinarian and technician), and 450 are veterinary technicians. The SVA is a branch of the Ministry

of Agriculture. Within the SVA is the Department of Animal Health and Welfare, which is responsible for animal disease monitoring and control, animal welfare, and animal identification, and includes the Crisis Center in Brno.

At the regional level, the country is divided into 14 regional administrative units, each of which is comprised of 3-12 districts. Agriculture comprises approximately 4% of the GDP and 4% of the employment in the country. There are no official veterinarians employed at the district level, although many work in the districts – the regions are the lowest level of employment. There is generally one chief animal health inspector with multiple subordinates at the regional level – the organization of regional and district SVA offices is similar to that at the central level.

The regional office in Prague is responsible for the border inspection post (BIP) at the Prague airport, although the official operation of the BIP is under the control of the Department of Veterinary Protection of State Territory and Foreign Relations (headquarters).

2. Legal authority

Legislation of the Czech Republic concerning veterinary matters was harmonized with European Commission (EC) legislations approximately 6 months prior to accession (roughly 180 documents). The Czech Republic is now fully harmonized, including approved slaughter and packing plants, HACCP strategies, and traceability of animals and products.

3. Outbreak information

Information on outbreaks of all former List A diseases must be sent to the OIE and other Member States via the Animal Disease Notification System (ADNS). The SVA would report all laboratory suspicions and occasionally a field suspicion by an official veterinarian (not a producer or private veterinarian). The OIE requires reporting of the initial outbreak plus every additional outbreak within 24 hours of occurrence, as well as summary reports on disease status twice per year.

The Crisis Center in Brno is responsible for coordinating emergencies. This is a permanent entity that serves as an information conduit during non-crisis periods. If a contagious animal disease was confirmed, the Head of the Crisis Center would be responsible for obtaining key information and notifying the EC and other Member States within 24 hours. Only BSE cases have been reported in recent years. There are two centers for eradication of contagious diseases in Brno and Hradec Králové with equipment to depopulate sick animals.

The suspected source of outbreaks in domestic swine in 1997 was transmission from wild boar (known to be infected at that time) via feed or litter. The suspected source of outbreaks in wild boar in 1999 was migration of wild boar from affected regions (Austria or Slovakia) during harvest time. Officials stated that the virus strains were known but could not make them immediately available to the team.

4. Disease surveillance

The State Veterinary Institute (SVI) in Jihlava is the National Reference Laboratory for FMD and other vesicular diseases. Regional laboratories perform serology screening tests

for CSF, but virology for confirmation occurs at the SVI. In districts neighboring Slovakia and Austria, and other nearby districts at high risk of CSF infection, 100% of wild boar found dead or hunted are tested for CSF. Throughout the rest of the country, 100% of wild boar found dead and 10% of all wild boar hunted are tested for CSF. All wild boar are tested for trichinellosis, which enables selection of the 10%. Hunters are paid 30 Euros (1000 Kč) for each wild boar found dead, and 10 Euros for each hunted wild boar in regions with antigen positive findings.

5. Training of veterinary officials

National simulation exercises have been conducted in recent years for FMD and HPAI, but not for CSF or SVD. The veterinary officials consider the principles to be the same for all such diseases. Simulations include the Czech army and local emergency services.

6. Import/trade controls

An official veterinarian at the external BIP inputs the shipment data into the TRACES system, which automatically informs the administrative unit at destination and other Member States as well. The shipment consigner is required to inform the BIP of planned arrival within 24 hours of shipment. At the BIP, veterinary inspectors perform document checks, identity checks, and physical examinations, including random laboratory testing. Testing is oriented towards countries with lower animal health status than the Czech Republic. Checks at the point of destination are also performed, in the Czech Republic at a level of almost 100% (per headquarters officials).

Trade among European Union (EU) Member States occurs in compliance with the conditions specified by EC legislation. The Czech Republic does not impose any additional restrictions on commodities from Slovakia.

7. Financial resources

All expenses of the SVA come out of the State budget. The EC contributes funding for monitoring of contagious animal diseases, including up to 60% of the cost of CSF monitoring. Such funding is accompanied by requirements for certain actions by the SVA and farmers. Emergency funding is according to procedures in the Veterinary Act Sections 68-70. Valuation of animals is generally 100% of market or slaughter value – the producers apply for compensation within 3 months, which can include all costs of the outbreak (cleaning, disinfection, etc). The regional offices can confirm the accuracy of the accounting if necessary. The application is approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and sent to the Ministry of Finance, since the cost is covered by State budget reserves.

8. Animal identification and holding registration

A presentation was given by the Head of the Ministry of Agriculture's Department of Animal Identification. Animal identification and holding registration is performed by the Ministry of Agriculture, which has contracted with the Czech Moravian Breeders Society (CMBS). The legal authority is given by the Act No. 154/2000 on the improvement, breeding and registration of livestock and on the amendment of some related laws (Breeding Act). This came into force for swine producers in April 2002, and is further supported by Decree No. 136/2004 laying down details concerning identification and registration of animals and the registration of holdings and persons stipulated by the Breeding Act.

Under this legislation, all swine producers are obliged to register their holding(s) and animals except for backyard farms with one pig. Farmers could theoretically not register, but would not be able to sell animals or move them without identification, and would not be compensated in the event of a disease outbreak.

Animal owners are obliged to send data monthly to the CMBS central database and update their own herd register, which is kept on the farm. This register must be submitted to an official veterinarian upon request during any on-farm inspection. The first two digits of the holding number indicate the region, and the remaining six digits denote a particular holding. For swine, the holding number is too long to use as a tattoo, so a "transfer bridge" has been implemented linking the holding number with a 4-digit number used as a tattoo.

Animal identification and holding registration inspections are carried out by two entities, the SVA and the Czech Breeding Inspectorate (CBI), which is also under the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture sends a list of farms to each entity. Farmers are controlled primarily by the CBI, and slaughterhouses/rendering plants are controlled by the regional SVA. Inspections occur annually on approximately 3% of holdings; these include a check of the tags or tattoos, comparison of the holding register and the CMBS data, and comparison of the number of reported versus actual animals on the holding. Compliance is variable.

9. On-farm inspections

About 3% of swine farms are inspected each year, and 10% of cattle farms. Veterinary inspectors check animal identification, reconcile the farm register with the central database information, and check the total number of animals. Compliance differs from farm to farm. All farms that commercially trade and want to be eligible for government compensation/indemnity must register and be subject to inspection.

10. Miscellaneous

Natural barriers include mountain ranges along the borders with Poland and Germany, but no real barriers to wild boar movement along the borders with Slovakia and Austria.

Prague-Ruzyně airport BIP

This BIP is approximately 2 years old, built partially with EU funding. It is the only external border port in the Czech Republic, since the country is entirely surrounded by other Member States. The facility is impressive but largely underutilized. The airport is EC-approved for products for human and non-human consumption, as well as inspection of small animals and "other" animals (zoo, exotic, horses). It is not approved for ruminants – the Czech authorities did not seek such approval. Products for import are mainly ornamental fish from Asian countries; also lamb from Australia and New Zealand, beef from Uruguay and Argentina, and semen from the United States. Compliance problems are primarily noted with sea products from China and Vietnam – documents not in order or missing, shipments from factories that are not on the EC approved list, or forged documents. Rates of noncompliance have generally declined since May 2004 due to greater familiarity of importers with EC requirements.

This BIP has been in full operation since accession. Inspectors had 3 weeks of on-the-job training via a visit from a German inspector. The BIP inspectors hold regular training for Customs agents to inform them of products that must be confiscated and educate them on control of small animal imports. Much of the small animal import checks are performed completely by the Customs Service, and the SVA is concerned that they are relying too heavily on the Customs Service.

The BIP is open 7-9 hours each day with 4 veterinarians on staff. In theory, there are 2 veterinarians dedicated to products and 2 dedicated to live animals, but officials noted the need for more specialization. The inspection staff relies heavily on Customs for checking passengers and on the airport authorities for handling waste disposal.

The site visit team met with BIP veterinarians and toured the facility, during which was witnessed the inspection of a shipment of ornamental fish.

1. Import controls

Inspection includes a document check to confirm approved country and establishment, as well as a Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVED) for all commercial commodities and a health certificate for live animals. A physical check – laboratory sampling – is performed on 1-5% of the commodity, according to EC regulations, but officials did not seem very familiar with the requirements. Frozen and refrigerated products are kept until the results are known, but perishable products are allowed to pass and the destination notified later if there is reason. No back-up samples are kept. This BIP has been on TRACES since accession and inspectors seem to be familiar with the system.

2. Volume and type of commodities received

The BIP currently receives approximately 2 tons of products per month, daily 5+ shipments of ornamental fish. The number of shipments has increased since accession to the EU. Flights arrive primarily from the United States, Canada, Ukraine, and Near East countries. Inspection extends to transshipment of products from third-to-third countries.

3. Inspection of passenger traffic

Passenger inspections are handled by Customs, who require animal products to have a veterinary certificate from approved facilities. They operate "according to their nose," target certain "higher risk" populations, and confiscate about 8-10 kg/day of livestock products. Confiscated products are sent to a rendering plant in Western Bohemia (handled by a cargo company) or are incinerated if deemed "risky." Flights considered to be highest risk are those from third countries (Canada, Egypt, Lebanon, Russia, Ukraine, United States, etc) and certain intra-Community flights with a lot of transit traffic, particularly from Asia. Catering waste is handled by CSA airlines.

<u>Regional SVA – South Bohemia Region</u>

This is the second largest region in the Czech Republic. It borders with 3 other regions within the country and has 240 km borders with Austria and 40 km borders with Germany. The regional SVA office is located in the capital of the region, České Budějovice. There are 7 districts in this region, which includes most of the Šumava

National Park on the border with Germany. The territory is generally flat with approximately 1/3 of the region forested.

The regional SVA has 169 employees, including 75 veterinarians, 65 veterinary technicians, and 8 veterinary assistants. The SVA office is divided into 3 sections: economics/financing, animal health and welfare, and public health. There are 12 veterinarians and 2 assistants working in the Animal Heath division, and 9 veterinarians working in the Animal Welfare division. The same divisional structure exists at the district level. There are also 180 private veterinarians and 42 private veterinary technicians in the region. Private practitioners are contracted by animal owners to perform activities mandated by law, for which they are subsidized by the government. There are no accredited veterinarians as such.

This region contains 240,000 cattle (100,000 milking cows) and 380,000-390,000 pigs, with about 40,000 sows. There are 1,116 swine holdings. Swine production is closed, with a history on even small farms of indoor farming, and therefore very limited access to wild boar.

1. On-farm inspections

Inspectors visit farms for animal health or welfare reasons, or possibly as a trace-back from a diseased animal found at slaughter. Inspections include the epidemiological and animal health situation, animal welfare, and animal identification. Officials were not clear whether inspectors looked for compliance with the waste feeding ban, but did say that very small farms may still be feeding waste. Approximately 10% of the swine farms in the region are inspected each year (100-150 farms), primarily large producers.

2. Training

Twice each year there is a meeting between the private veterinary chamber and the official SVA veterinarians. The district officials have monthly meetings with regional officials at which are discussed current regulations and disease characteristics. Each January the regional office goes through all instructions with the district veterinarians, with additional sessions if new regulations are passed down from headquarters SVA. Each district inspector has access to the SVA website, which contains instructions. The SVA officials also discuss biosecurity measures and risk concerns with farming (producers) associations.

3. Disease surveillance

Blood samples for CSF are collected from all boars at semen collection centers as well as from boars and sows at slaughter. In the past 11 years there have been no field suspicions of CSF or SVD reported in this region. Both wild boar and domestic swine are typically sampled for CSF at 10% in this region. Seropositive findings were reported in wild boar in 2 places in January 2005, although no virus was confirmed. In these districts, 50% of domestic sows and boars presented for slaughter are tested, as are 50% of all wild boar hunted in the districts, and all wild boar found dead. The hunting association allows more hunting in these areas to increase the number of samples taken. From January-May there were 700 samples taken in domestic pigs in the region.

The districts send monthly reports to the region on surveillance, disease control measures, and other activities, which are collated and forwarded to the Crisis Center and central SVA offices. There have been no suspect CSF cases reported in domestic swine.

4. Emergency response

If a CSF outbreak is suspected, the regional officials would inform the central SVA in Prague and the Crisis Center in Brno. If the outbreak was confirmed, the EU would be informed, as well as local emergency response units and private veterinarians. Contingency plans exist at the regional level that incorporate the district offices. There are currently contingency plans for FMD, END, CSF, and HPAI; the central SVA is preparing a plan for SVD, although response measures are covered generally under the FMD/vesicular disease plan.

5. Movement control

Health certificates are required for movement within the Czech Republic. Private veterinarians can sign certificates for movement to slaughter and can initiate certificates for movement from farm to farm or between regions; however, the latter must be signed by an official SVA veterinarian as well. Copies of these health certificates are kept at the district level. The regional offices have access to TRACES. There were 4 imports of swine from Germany and the Netherlands in both 2004 and 2005. The regulations specify 20% control at destination, although this region does 100% control. This includes checks on documents, identification, and a physical exam. Imported swine are isolated for 28 days and tested for CSF, brucellosis, and Aujeszky's disease.

Regional SVA – South Moravia region

This region consists of 7 districts covering 7000 sq km, bordering with both Austria and Slovakia. There are rivers along each border, but veterinary officials indicated that these do not present a barrier to wild boar movement. There is lots of permanent forest on the borders. In 2004, there were approximately 484,901 pigs in the region, of which 39,600 were sows. The number of pigs is decreasing slightly each year. Officials estimated a spring census of wild boar (adults only) of approximately 3000 animals – in contrast to pigs, the wild boar population is increasing gradually due to favorable weather and nourishment (corn) conditions. This region has 171 holdings with over 50 sows.

The regional office has 179 employees of which 97 are veterinarians, 9 of whom work in the animal health section. There are also 57 veterinary technicians and 140 private veterinarians who work for the SVA on a contract basis to perform certain preventive actions. The regional office is located in Brno.

The epidemiology chief for the region indicated that CSF infection in wild boar had spread from Austria in 1990-1994 and from Slovakia 1996-1998. The spread from Austria began when fencing was eliminated along the border. CSF cases in wild boar include 2 in 1990 (beginning of introduction from Austria), 4 in 1991, 6 in 1992, 3 in 1993, 3 in 1994, 1 in 1995, and 3 in 1996 (beginning of introduction from Slovakia). The last virology positive findings in wild boar were in 1999. Outbreaks in domestic swine occurred in this region in Tábor and Kroměříž in 1994, and Břeclav in 1997. Outbreaks in wild boar occurred in 1999 in Vyškov, Kroměříž, Uherské Hradiště, Vsetín, and Zlín.

The site visit team met with regional and district SVA officials, including the chief epidemiologist for the region, and also officials from the Crisis Center in Brno.

1. Surveillance

Serological monitoring in domestic swine was transferred to slaughterhouses from on-farm as the epidemiological situation improved. Serologic testing of boars and sows increases to 100% if antibodies are found in wild boar. All wild boar found dead must be tested throughout the Czech Republic; 100% of all wild boar hunted in districts bordering Austria and Slovakia are tested for CSF. If an antibody-positive wild boar is found, surveillance in wild boar increases to 50% of the hunted population in the district. Otherwise, surveillance is set at 10% of the hunted population. There are currently 2 districts in this region in which 100% of hunted wild boar are tested, 1 in which 50% are tested, and the other 4 are tested at 10% (primarily land without forests).

Slovakia vaccinates wild boar now with a marker strain that laboratories in the Czech Republic can distinguish from field strain (the Head of the Animal Health and Welfare Department of the central SVA later indicated that Czech officials did not know which vaccine was being used in Slovakia and said that the number of apparent seropositive boar may increase in coming years due to migration of the vaccinated population). There have been no clinical suspicions of CSF in this region.

All hunted wild boar are tested for trichinella. A hunting association can ask for additional testing on any wild boar found dead. CSF samples are taken via blood and organs by private veterinarians with special training and by SVA officials. Samples may be collected in the field or at collection centers. Sampling tends to occur at a rate higher than 10% of both expected and real totals. In order for new hunters to receive permission for hunting they must undergo training in veterinary diseases. Older hunters are trained regularly by hunting associations and/or the SVA. Hunters can turn in just blood and organs rather than the whole carcass.

SVD surveillance in domestic swine is conducted at slaughter and consists of testing 3% of sows and 100% of boars.

2. Crisis Center in Brno

The Crisis Center is the official animal disease data collection hub of the Czech Republic. The major activities include (1) receiving epidemiological information from all regions, processing the data, and disseminating information; (2) notifying of cases of contagious diseases (to OIE et al); and (3) dealing with animal health crises. All information on CSF and SVD testing is collected here as well as at the central level. The regional SVA offices inform the Crisis Center monthly of new cases, ongoing cases, and closed cases of all diseases. All financial resources for emergency response are allocated through the central SVA.

3. Movement controls

Movement within regions – no health certificate is required for movement within a region unless going to a slaughterhouse, show/fair, or assembly center, in which case an SVA veterinarian must attest to the disease conditions on the farm. A health certificate is required for movement between regions and to other countries – a private veterinarian

can perform the exam, but the certificate must be stamped by an official veterinarian as well.

The regional SVA office has access to TRACES. Controls at destination include document checks with diagnostic testing conducted as necessary. The SVA would inform the country of origin of the test findings. In the last year this region received about 500 pigs from France and the Netherlands. Roughly 10% of the shipments were controlled at the destination and no animals were tested for CSF.

3. On-farm inspections

According to the "Methodology," each holding is visited at least once per year; in reality, each holding is visited at least once per year and some more often (this does not include very small farms with 1-2 animals). Inspections focus on animal identification, record keeping, and animal health and welfare issues. The activities of private veterinarians are also verified at this time. All farms with >1 pig are required to register with the CMBS. Regional officials indicated that they could locate all holdings in the region if necessary.

4. Training

Training for private veterinarians is performed at the district level via monthly meetings – these cover infectious disease recognition. Continuing education is also provided by the Veterinary Chamber, and SVA officials give courses as needed. The Crisis Center organizes practical field training in cooperation with the Military Veterinary Service on how to deal with suspect cases. Such training was held in Northern Moravia in 2004. Some veterinarians also participate in international training courses, including one in Hanover, Germany, three years ago concerning CSF diagnostic and eradication procedures.

<u>District SVA offices – Břeclav (South Moravia region)</u>

This district consists of 1152 sq km with about 16% forest cover. A large amount of acreage is protected hunting reserves. There are 102 pig holdings with roughly 75,000 pigs and 5,850 sows. District officials have access to databases of animal holdings/keepers, SVA programs, TRACES, and EU regulations (EuroLex). The district office has 1 full-time and 3 part-time staff members, all of whom are veterinarians. There are also 11 private veterinarians who perform activities on behalf of the SVA.

The site visit team, accompanied by regional SVA officials, met with district SVA officials, including the epidemiologist for the district. The team reviewed the contingency plans (very impressive), TRACES records for the assembly center in the district (which included detailed health certificates), farm inspection records, an animal keeper database, and general health certificates – these can be issued by private veterinarians if animals are going to slaughter but otherwise are not usually needed for movement within the region otherwise.

1. Surveillance

There are 68 hunting associations in the district, divided into private groups and those responsible for state forests. In 2004 there were 1603 wild boar hunted, all of which were examined by an official veterinarian for trichinellosis and CSF. Samples were sent to the

SVI Jihlava or SVI Brno. Since September 2004, wild boar for consumption by the hunter are not held until the CSF results are known, only the trichinellosis results.

There have been 3 seropositive wild boar found in this district so far this year, two piglets and a yearling found close to the border with Austria. After considerable discussion, the official explanations were (1) vertical transmission from exposed generations; (2) exposure to attenuated live wild virus; (3) migrations from Austria or Slovakia; or (4) transfer via colostrum (young animals). Surveillance in domestic swine is currently conducted at the slaughterhouse, where 50% of all sows and boars are tested.

2. Outbreak history

The last virology positive case in wild boar in this district occurred in 1997, when there were 3 positive cases. The response was to cordon off the village in which these cases occurred and set up a 3 km surveillance zone and a 10 km protection zone. A standstill was effected, vehicles banned, and information concerning the outbreak was sent to all affected groups – military, customs, emergency response, slaughterhouses, etc. Group hunting was banned but the SVA worked with the hunting associations to increase individual hunting throughout the two zones. All carcasses were inspected and tested by the SVA and then condemned and transported to rendering facilities. The percentage of the wild boar population hunted was unknown, although the numbers were greater than in previous years.

Control measures in domestic swine within the surveillance and protection zones included allowing movement to slaughter and other destinations only after a negative herd test. All herds in the protection and surveillance zones were tested with theoretical coverage of all age groups: (1) less than 20 pigs on the farm = all tested; (2) 20-100 pigs = 20 minimum plus 20% of remaining; (2) over 100 pigs = 20 minimum plus 10% of remaining. All dead or sick pigs exhibiting clinical signs of CSF were submitted for testing. The only positive serologic findings were sows that had been previously vaccinated.

3. Emergency response

The district offices had 3 binders of contingency plans. The first contained an extended version of all orders, instructions, and CSF plans generated at the central SVA level. The general contingency plan laid out extraordinary disease control measures, which also apply to slaughterhouses, markets, and transit vehicles. The second contained detailed information regarding the farms in the district, including contact information, number and type of animals, maps of the geographical location and access roads, and a schematic of the farm plan. This information is updated regularly and all updates must be stamped and dated by an SVA official. The third binder contained contingency plans for all of the former List A diseases, including SVD.

4. On-farm inspections

Farms with less than 50 sows are inspected by the SVA as needed but must be inspected at least once every 4 years. Farms with more than 50 sows are inspected at least once per year but could be inspected more often. Inspectors look at waste feeding (no noncompliance noted), and the public health service is responsible for controlling restaurant waste, which limits access by pig owners.

5. Private veterinarians

There are 11 contracted veterinarians in this district. These veterinarians are subsidized by the SVA to conduct health control measures, take samples in the case of abortions, take blood samples for various diseases, and conduct monitoring activities on poultry farms. The veterinarians may elect to charge animal owners in addition to the subsidy provided by the SVA. Private veterinarians are not accredited, but must attend mandatory monthly meetings with SVA officials, at which are discussed measures ordered in the previous month and the coming month (oversight).

6. Auditing

Each district is responsible for its own annual financial planning but can apply for emergency adjustments through the regional SVA if necessary. It is the responsibility of the regional SVA offices to ensure that the districts officers are performing their duties.

District SVA offices – Kroměříž (Zlín region)

Region – there are 4 districts in this region. The region is 3964 sq km and is surrounded on the west and east by mountains of the Carpathian range. There are 95 employees in the regions, of which 51 are veterinarians, 4 are veterinary assistants, 20 are veterinary technicians, and the other are administration personnel. The regional and district offices each have 3 departments – animal health and welfare, public health, and economics/finances. There are no assembly centers in this region.

District – The district consists of 70% arable soil with high agricultural production. The land provides good nourishment for wild boar and there is good winter survival potential. There are 41,000 pigs in the district on 15 holdings, with 4,000 sows (i.e., mostly fattening pigs). There is one large farm with approximately 18,900 pigs and 1,700 sows (visited next). The estimated spring wild boar population is 1,200 animals, although officials indicated that there is considerable uncertainty associated with this figure. There are 9 official veterinarians in the district office. Kroměříž does not directly border Slovakia, but borders other districts in the region that in turn border Slovakia.

The team, accompanied by regional officials, met with district officials (including the epidemiologist) and reviewed records of animal holdings via access to the CMBS website, contingency plans, and records of on-farm inspections. On the latter, there was no area to note compliance with the swine waste feeding ban.

1. CSF outbreaks

The last CSF outbreak in domestic swine in this district occurred in June 1997; an outbreak in wild boar was subsequently detected in August 1997 approximately 5-10km away. In 1998, there were 3 virology positive wild boar found, one of which was hunted while showing clinical signs. In 1999, numerous seropositive wild boar were detected in the same locality, and 2 virology-positive wild boar were detected in August. Seropositive wild boar continued to be detected in the district through 2002 in decreasing numbers. Official veterinarians gave the following reasons for continued seropositive wild boar: (1) findings in surrounding districts leaking over; (2) surviving virus in pockets of wild boar in forested regions; and (3) migration of wild boar from Slovakia.

2. Surveillance

There is currently 100% sampling of wild boar in Zlín and 2 other districts in the region, since serology positive wild boar have been found in these districts. The Kroměříž district is currently sampling at a rate of 10%. All districts are sampling domestic swine at a rate of 100% of all sows and boars.

Hunting in wild boar: 1997 – 400; 1998 – 480; 1999 – 547; 2000 – 415; 2001 – 476: 2002 – 689; 2003 – 580; and 2004 – 709. Hunting numbers are increasing due to greater numbers of wild boar, although SVA officials could not accurately estimate the number of wild boar in the region.

Sampling for SVD comprises 3% of all sows and 100% of boars at slaughter.

3. Training

No simulations have been conducted in this district or region; however, the SVA officials hold working meetings at the regional and district levels and educational meetings with private veterinarians throughout the year.

District SVA – Uherské Hradiště (Zlín region)

This district is primarily composed of agricultural area, with minimal industrialization. The district veterinarian considers it to be different from the Kroměříž district in that there are no large farms (15-20K pigs) located near forested regions. There are about 40,000 pigs in the district, including 3,000 sows, on 50 holdings. There are also about 2,000 wild boar. There are 15 veterinarians in the district office, 3 of whom work in animal health, and 5 technicians. This office sends monthly reports on all diseases to the regional offices in Zlín, who then send the collated information to the SVA headquarters and the Crisis Center in Brno.

The team reviewed the contingency plans and a monthly report.

1. Outbreak history

An outbreak in wild boar (virology positive) occurred in 1997. The district official indicated that the infection most likely was introduced from Slovakia, possibly via the Kroměříž district. There had also been findings in wild boar in neighboring Hodonín and Břeclav districts in the years prior. The same year, there was a secondary outbreak in domestic swine linked to movement of a pig from an infected holding in Kroměříž. This outbreak was not discovered as the result of a trace-out, but rather after a private veterinarian sent in samples when antibiotics failed to work.

2. Emergency response

In case of suspicion of CSF in wild boar, the district veterinarian would notify the local hunting associations, the SVA, and the local crisis unit. The regional SVA would determine the extraordinary measures needed regarding hunting intensity and sampling.

Visits to farms and slaughterhouses

Small swine farm – Vlasatice

This farm has 5,900 pigs, of which 550 are sows, and produces fattened pigs for slaughter as well as piglets for sale to other farms. The facility was constructed in 1972 and has been under the current ownership since 2000. The facility is relatively run down with poorly ventilated and outdated holding areas, although there are two new waste-holding tanks built with 50% EU financing. There are 14 employees and the farm capacity is 8,500 pigs; they produce 900-1000 tons of meat per year. There are also 1,100 ha of arable soil on which is grown corn, rape, and other grains. Dry feed is mixed on the farm and fed to fattening pigs, whereas the breeding sows receive bought fodder. Manure and liquid waste are used on the fields.

The farm is primarily closed but bought 25 bred gilts from France last year. Replacement stock is generally gilts bred on the farm (35% bought, 65% own bred) and the farm has its own artificial insemination center. Incoming pigs pass through quarantine at the parent company facilities. The main disease of concern on the farm is pneumonia. The farm vaccinates against erysipelas and parvovirus, and routinely tests for brucellosis and Aujeszky's disease in cases of abortion.

The team was accompanied on this visit by regional and district SVA officials, and met with the farm owner and several employees. A tour of the facilities was conducted.

1. Biosecurity measures

Biosecurity measures include external fencing, no entry without permission by owner, a guard at night, and entry is generally permitted only for feed delivery and other licensed individuals. Theoretically, employees must change clothes on entry – no changing facilities were seen – and shower out (shower-in was not mentioned). Pigs are transported to the slaughterhouse by the slaughtering company. Dead pigs are put in a holding facility outside of the main farm grounds and the rendering company picks them up. The site visit team was given disposable coveralls, booties, and hair nets. No footbaths were seen. Company employees were wearing street clothes, and the employees who directed the team on the tour did not change clothes on entry. Employees can keep pigs and some buy from this farm. Biosecurity measures were generally less than desirable.

2. Movement controls

Virtually all pigs are sold within the district. Outgoing and arriving consignments are accompanied by a health certificate. The regional SVA was notified before the arrival of the pigs from France and conducted an animal welfare inspection of the premises prior to arrival, then returned to inspect the animals and test for brucellosis and Aujeszky's disease. The test results were entered into the TRACES system so that the source country would know the findings.

3. Animal identification

This farm has been registered by the CMBS since April 2002. All daily changes in herd numbers are recorded and sent to the database once per month in accordance with the regulations. Farm employees indicated that piglets are marked with an alphanumeric internal code in the left ear. Young females to be kept are also marked in the right ear with their mother's identification number and given ear tags with the holding identification. The site visit team viewed the records of animal identification and found them to be in good order – on 31 May 2005 there were 4955 pigs on the holding. The

herd code is 62011620, and the bridge code is CCT2. Ear tattoos used for identification were not particularly legible.

4. On-farm inspections

The SVA visited this farm around April-May to inspect record keeping and brucellosis testing procedures (performed by private veterinarian). This farm is usually inspected once per year but this year has already received three visits, in part due to the arrival of the French pigs.

Large swine farm – Tesnovice

This farm was originally built in 1972. It is located in the Kroměříž district of the Zlín region. There is a private veterinarian who works exclusively here and in small animal practice. The operation has had "Bioveritas" quality certification since 2001 and has been certified for environmental measures since November 2004. See previous section for demographic figures. There are currently a large number of employees (60). All animals go to slaughter from this farm – there are 4 permanent commercial partners, 2 in the Czech Republic and 2 in Slovakia.

The team did not go on the farm but were shown an informational video tour.

1. Biosecurity measures

This farm has been under "closed" production since 2001 and consequently takes in no animals from outside farms. Boar semen provides new genetic material. The farm is surrounded by fencing with a gated entrance. Entry of feed and other supply trucks onto the farm is allowed, as are transport vehicles to the slaughterhouse. All trucks must be approved by the owner and must pass through a disinfection vat. There are two changing rooms with showers and employees cannot wear street clothes on the farm. Employees are allowed to keep pigs but to the owner's knowledge none do. Visitors are expected to sign a declaration that they have not been on another pig farm within 48 hours, shower, and change clothes. The manager indicated that the shower/change procedures are sometimes exempted for visitors and specialists, although the latter often come on Monday mornings following a non-work weekend.

This farm is in the process of upgrading the feed delivery system. There is a manure collection and treatment area, from which manure in liquid and solid forms is transported for distribution on the fields. Underground storage tanks have the capacity to retain a 5 months supply.

2. Private veterinarian

The private veterinarian indicated that the primary diseases of concern are mycoplasma pneumonia, pleuropneumonia, swine dysentery, PRRS, and circovirus. The farm vaccinates against E. coli, porcine respiratory and reproductive syndrome (sows), mycoplasmosis (piglets), APP (at 20 weeks), swine erysipelas, and parvovirus (gilts).

If CSF were suspected, the veterinarian would inform the district SVA office, then follow the contingency plan as directed. Clinical signs of CSF were stated as fever, a general

decrease in health with a large number of swine affected, hemorrhagic changes, and pathologic changes.

3. Animal identification and movement control

All pigs are tattooed on the left ham with the alphanumeric code designated by the CMBS. The private veterinarian signs health certificates for all animals leaving the holding and going to slaughter. An official SVA veterinarian countersigns health certificates and supervises the loading of all pigs going to Slovakia.

Slaughterhouse – Jatka Planá nad Lužnicí

This is a joint stock company that slaughters primarily pigs but some cattle. It is FSIS approved, EC approved, and ISO 9001 and 4001 accredited, and produces meat for the McDonalds chain in the Czech Republic. The company is among the top three slaughter establishment in the Czech Republic and business interests extend over 1 billion Kč (60 million USD) per year. There are 480 employees. The plant slaughters approximately 150 pigs per hour (generally 100-120 kg) using carbon dioxide gas stunning and generally slaughters 3,500 pigs and 200 cattle per week.

Animals are usually sourced from Bohemia – there are 5 main source farms that supply 80% of the incoming animals. Over 99% of animals come from within the Czech Republic; the plant once imported 240 pigs from the Netherlands but found that they were of poor quality. Theoretically, small producers could send animals for slaughter here, but this is discouraged. The site visit team was shown figures indicating that the smallest contributor sent >100 pigs in one month.

There are 4 veterinarians working at the plant and 10 veterinary technicians, all of whom are SVA employees. There is an SVA office in the plant. Plant workers can keep pigs of their own but must inform the plant management. This plant has no current export market, though previously sent canned meat to the United States. They currently send fresh pork to other EU Member States and are trying to open a market for jerky.

No samples are taken for CSF monitoring at this plant, as the animals are considered to be too young. The site visit team was accompanied by regional and district SVA officials, and met with the owner, chief veterinary inspector, regional public health inspector, and laboratory chief before touring the slaughter and receiving areas (not the cutting/packing facilities).

1. Ante-mortem inspection

One inspector checks animal health and welfare when the pigs are unloaded, collects the health certificates, and performs document, identification, and physical checks. This inspector also checks the condition of the delivery vehicle. If a shipment fails any part of the checks, the inspector can decide to isolate or destroy (not through the regular slaughter process) the animals.

2. Animal identification

The slaughterhouse is responsible for reporting identification information from the animals presented for slaughter. They generally send daily reports, although the rule is

that reports must be sent every 7 days. The veterinary inspectors perform random checks with the CMBS central database.

3. CSF outbreak – emergency response

A CSF-infected boar was found at this slaughterhouse in 1994, when they had facilities for emergency slaughter of older animals (separate facility).The veterinary inspector found lesions consistent with CSF and immediately informed the district SVA and the plant manager. The plant was closed, standstill was effected, and the case was confirmed by virology. The source farm was traced and stamping out performed. Meat that had been collected was destroyed by rendering, and cleaning and disinfection measures taken.

4. Tracking

Beef products can be tracked by the consumer via the internet (demonstrated for the team). The product label contains a code that can be used via the company website to access information including breed, age, date of birth, origin farm, gender, where fattened, weight at slaughter, date of slaughter, and part of body in the package. This is primarily driven by BSE concerns. A similar system is anticipated for pork products, although perhaps not as detailed; trace-back of pork products to the farm of origin is theoretically possible but not nearly as highly evolved.

Other sites visited

Collection center – Zoomorava Březí

This privately-owned collection center is EU-approved for swine, cattle, sheep, and goats. It is located in the Břeclav district of the South Moravia region. Animals are collected here for both intra-Community trade and export to third countries, and the facility may also be used for staging during transit. The collection center has been in use for about 1 year and was previously a dairy farm. Approximately 20 shipments have arrived since January 2005; animals stay between 24 hours and 6 days (EU maximum).

All consignments are unloaded and pass through a control area, where an identity check and physical exam are performed. In the meantime, drivers are required to wash and disinfect their trucks. If everything, including incoming documentation, is in order, the SVA issues a health certificate for travel and prepares the TRACES information manually (no access to TRACES at the center). A private veterinarian can perform the physical exams but the health certificate must be countersigned by an SVA official. An SVA official supervises all loadings.

This is one of 14 collection centers in the Czech Republic, but one of only 3 such centers that can also be used for staging. Officials indicated that two groups of animals from regions with the same epidemiological situation may reside in the collection center at the same time; however, if the epidemiological situation differs, just one group is allowed.

Wild boar collection center – Lesni Zavod Židlochovice Castle

This collection center is located on the grounds of a castle built circa 1300, which has belonged to the State since 1918. It is located in the Břeclav district of the South Moravia

region. The officials here are responsible for 170,000 ha of land with 25,000 ha of forest – hunting is very important. This collecting center gathers wild boar only from this region. The facility is EC approved and ships to Germany. There have been 66 boars (all juveniles) inspected here so far in 2005, although the majority of hunting occurs in the fall. There were approximately 400 boars inspected here in 2004. Juvenile boars can be hunted all year (representing about 90% of the annual kill), but adult boars can only be hunted from August 1 – January 15. Both individual and group hunting is allowed.

The team met with the deputy director of the castle, the chief of the collection center, the SVA officer in charge of inspections at the center, the chief public health officer of Brno, and the deputy director of the region. The team reviewed the certificates of veterinary inspection, the forms filled out by the hunters that accompany the carcass to the center, the laboratory submission forms. The team also toured the collection center, which consisted of a receiving/inspection room and a chilled holding room. Three hunted wild boar with yellow band tags were seen.

1. Order of processing

At the time of kill, the hunter is responsible for identifying the boar with a yellow bracelet tag (which has a unique identification number) through a hind limb and filling out the accompanying documentation. This includes recording the date, place of kill, kind of animal, hunting area, and the hour of kill. Intestines are removed and examined by the hunter. The boar may be inspected by an official veterinarian at an auxiliary collection center in the field prior to transport to this center, in which case a veterinary certificate would be issued. Either way, the carcass must arrive at the main collection center within 12 hours of kill and be inspected by the SVA officer within 18 hours of arrival. Game can be stored at the collection center but must be dispatched within 15 days.

2. Surveillance

In districts where 100% sampling of wild boar is required, hunters are responsible for taking the blood samples at the time of kill (plastic collection tubes were observed). If a sample is not taken, an official veterinarian would take one at the point of inspection. SVA veterinarians also take samples of kidney, spleen, and tonsils or lymph nodes for CSF, and samples for trichinella. In districts where only 10% sampling of wild boar is required, the blood and tissue samples are taken at the first point of inspection in the field – samples are not taken at the main collection center. Veterinary officials at the field inspection points theoretically choose the boars to sample randomly.

Wild boar that are found dead are not brought to the collection center, but rather are brought to the SVI in their entirety (small animals) or as samples taken by hunters. The bodies of dead wild boar are rendered.

3. Emergency response

In case of suspicion of CSF on inspection, the SVA officer would inform the epidemiologist in Brno but would take no further action.

<u>Šumava National Park</u>

This is the largest park in the Czech Republic, established in 1991. It is approximately 690 square km with 80% forest land. This park crosses the border with Germany to become the Bavarian Forest. There are an estimated 200-400 wild boar in the park; however, the forest does not contain particularly good forage for wild boar, so most of the population is considered to be migratory. There are 100 park rangers.

The site visit team, accompanied by regional and district SVA officials, met with the chief park ranger and the SVA officer in charge of the park. A short video was presented regarding flora and fauna of the park, then a presentation on wild boar surveillance.

1. Hunting

Wild boar hunted in 2000-2005:	2000	261
	2001	227
	2002	312
	2003	101
	2004	330
	2005	4

Staff rangers conduct all wild boar hunting in the park. The primary purpose is to protect other animal and plant species; therefore, the number of boar hunted is decided by the level of protection needed and not planned in advance. The rangers are paid per boar and the goal is to hunt the largest number possible. After a boar is shot, a yellow band with a unique identification number is put on a hind leg. The number is registered on an ID card, which also is filled out with information on the date, time, and place of kill, as well as type/age of boar. This form accompanies the carcass through veterinary inspection to the customer.

2. Surveillance

All wild boar are submitted for trichinella testing (digestion method) and the carcass is only released upon negative test. Blood samples for CSF are collected from a minimum of 10% of the hunted wild boar. The 10% sampling is intended to achieve 95% confidence of detecting 20% prevalence. The site visit team did not receive a good answer as to how the 10% was chosen. Samples are taken at a single collection center; there is also a collection center in the segment of the park that lies in a different administrative region. All samples are taken by SVA officials. No particular age group is targeted for testing. All wild boar found dead are submitted for CSF testing (virology) as well. There have been no CSF cases in the extended park.

Closing meeting

A closing meeting was conducted at the end of the site visit at which the APHIS team summarized their findings and presented additional information needs (see below). The site visit team also indicated that a subsequent visit to evaluate the diagnostic laboratories would be necessary.

Strengths of the Czech program include good consistency among regions and districts, excellent emergency preparedness at the district level, excellent document control, and the establishment of a permanent Crisis Center in Brno. One identified weakness was the

CSF surveillance plan in wild boar which, although generally sound, appeared to result in over-sampling of some districts and under-sampling in others. An oddity was the lack of viable explanation at the official level for continued seropositive findings in wild boar, or official recognition that migration of infected wild boar from Slovakia is a plausible explanation for these findings.

Czech officials expressed disappointment regarding the lengthy timeframe for APHIS rulemaking. In addition, the Head of the Animal Health and Welfare Department did not agree with some of the conclusions of the site visit team, especially regarding surveillance concerns and migration of wild boar from Slovakia. He asserted that the CSF status in the Czech Republic was "good" because the last case in wild boar was in November 1999, but acknowledged that Slovakia is using a vaccine (he did not know if it was a marker vaccine) that might result in some seropositive findings.

Additional information requested during the closing meeting:

1. Estimated number of wild boar per region in 2005
2. Number of CSF and SVD suspect cases (field, lab) 2000-2005
3. Age distribution of serologically positive wild boar 2000-2005
4. Demographic information on herd size – number of herds in each category
5. Location of swine farms with more than 5000 pigs (map helpful)
6. Location of swine farms most likely to export to the United States (map helpful)
7. Decree No. 299/2003 Sections 38-58 (CSF emergency plans) in English